

LCQ16: Participating government departments of 1823

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Ngan Man-yu and a written reply by the Secretary for Innovation, Technology and Industry, Professor Sun Dong, in the Legislative Council today (March 27):

Question:

There are views that at present, 1823 is responsible for handling enquiries, compliments and suggestions made by members of the public for 23 participating government departments. Compared with the structure of over 60 policy bureaux/government departments (B/Ds) in the entire Government, the number and proportion of B/Ds participating in 1823 are obviously on the low side, and the enquiries and views of many members of the public are still unable to be conveyed to the relevant B/Ds through such one-stop service. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the principles or criteria based on which the Government determines which B/Ds need to join 1823, and the unit whose decisions are final; when the relevant principles or criteria were drawn up;
- (2) of the mechanism or procedures for B/Ds to join 1823;
- (3) of the number of cases received by 1823 which were outside its service scope (such as cases involving non-participating B/Ds) in each of the past five years, with a breakdown by B/D;
- (4) as it is learnt that there were a total of 21 participating government departments of 1823 in 2011, with the present number being 23, of the reasons why only two government departments newly joined 1823 in the past 12 years;
- (5) whether it has reviewed if B/Ds not participating in 1823 need to join 1823; if it has, of the time when the last review was conducted and the details of the relevant work; and
- (6) whether it has plans to increase the number of participating B/Ds of 1823; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

My consolidated reply to the various parts of the question raised by Dr the Hon Ngan is as follows:

1823 receives service requests and complaints to all bureaux/departments (B/Ds) from the public that require their handling, and handles public

enquiries, compliments and suggestions for participating departments. Currently, 1823 has 23 participating departments, and the scope of enquiry service covers most government services that are closely related to citizens' livelihood, such as environment and food hygiene, public housing, public transportation, cultural and leisure activities, labour rights, financial assistance for education, working allowance and social security. In addition to regular services, 1823 will also provide short-term hotline support for major government projects and initiatives when necessary. For example, 1823 supported a number of epidemic-related hotlines during the COVID-19 epidemic and supported the election enquiry hotline on the Legislative Council and District Council election days. 1823 resolved 99 per cent of the telephone enquiries at the first time of calling. When 1823 receives an enquiry involving a non-participating department, it will provide the citizen with the telephone hotline number or contact method of the relevant department so that he/she can make enquiries directly to the relevant department.

All government departments have their own hotlines for answering public enquiries. Some departments also have telephone enquiry centres and district offices, with dedicated staff answering public inquiries about the department's services. Some also set up hotlines for special projects or services, which are handled by staff with relevant domain knowledge. Departments will consider whether to invite 1823 to handle their enquiry hotline based on their actual operational situation. In general, 1823 is more suitable for handling general enquiries about government services. If the enquiries received by a department mostly involve specific details of the cases related to individual citizens, the domain knowledge of specialised departments, or matters related to law enforcement, it is more appropriate for the responsible staff of the department to handle the enquiries directly. When considering whether to provide services to individual departments, 1823 will consider various factors with the relevant departments, such as the expected nature and volume of incoming calls, to determine the most effective way to handle enquiries from members of the public.

During the past five years, enquiries concerning participating departments accounted for an average of about 92 per cent of the total number of enquiries received by 1823, while enquiries involving non-participating departments accounted for only about eight per cent on average (see the Annex for the number of cases). The Efficiency Office will continue to review the manpower, operations and service scope of 1823 from time to time, and introduce new technologies with a view to providing convenient and high-quality services to the public.